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ABSTRACT

Service learning has been shown to enhance elementary, secondary, and undergraduate college students' intellectual and prosocial behavior, cognitive learning, socialization, citizenship, self-esteem, mentoring ability, attitudes toward diverse communities, and job placement and development. This paper presents findings of a study that examined the effects and extent of aspiring administrators' involvement in a service-learning practicum. Thirty-five students in an educational leadership doctoral program completed a service-learning experience as a requirement of the program and reported on the dates, location, and description of the practicum, appropriate number of hours served, estimated number of people expected to benefit, both directly and indirectly, anticipated benefits to the organization and its clients, benefits the participants derived from the experience, and problems or difficulties encountered. The findings suggest that participation may enhance aspiring school leaders' attitude toward service learning, enable them to assess the benefits of service learning to the organizations and individuals served, and permit future administrators to understand the problems inherent in such programs. The most frequently encountered barriers included time and client resistance. One table is included. (Contains 36 references.) (LMI)

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Running head: SERVICE LEARNING FOR ASPIRING SCHOOL LEADERS

Service Learning for Aspiring School Leaders: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Service learning had been shown to enhance elementary, secondary, and undergraduate college students' intellectual and pro-social behavior, cognitive learning and socialization and citizenship, self-concept and self-esteem, mentoring ability, attitudes toward diverse communities and varied populations, and job placement and career development. The effect of service learning on educational leaders, even aspiring educational leaders who were graduate students, had remained an issue not directly addressed empirically. This study addressed that issue. Thirty-five participants in an educational leadership doctoral program completed a service learning experience and reported on the dates, location, and description of the practicum, approximate number of hours served, estimated number of people expected to benefit, both directly and indirectly, anticipated benefits to the organization and its clients, benefits the participant derived from the experience, and problems or difficulties encountered. The findings suggested that participation in service learning experiences by aspiring school leaders may enhance their valuing of service learning, may enable them to assess the benefits of service learning to the organizations and individuals served, and may permit those aspiring leaders to delineate the difficulties and problems to be overcome in service learning programs.

Service Learning for Aspiring School Leaders: An Exploratory Study

The ethical focus on preparing the educational leader as a servant leader who looks beyond self to what must be accomplished for the learners in the classrooms, schools, school districts and communities of our nation (Greenleaf, 1977) is one of the hallmarks of Duquesne University's Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders (IDPEL). Indeed, the IDPEL program faculty believe that the program participants (the doctoral "students") -- as the educational leaders of the 21st century -- hold the key to our society's health, prosperity, and perhaps even survival. Service learning experiences that are change-oriented, rather than charity-oriented, are required for the purpose of preparing such educators (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). The IDPEL program faculty wanted to design a service learning experience that would both encourage the participants both to understand the value of servant leadership in their schools and school districts and to experience first-hand the value of service learning. The researchers in this study of those service learning experiences were guided by the questions: (a) what are the effects of involvement -- and extent of involvement -- of aspiring school leaders in a service learning practicum on their valuing of the practicum, in particular, and service learning, in general; (b) what are the reported benefits to the participants and to the organizations they served; and (c) what are the difficulties and problems to be overcome in service learning programs that participants acknowledged?

Service learning has been shown to be a an effective tool to enhance both intellectual and pro-social behavior among P-12 students. Students' academic achievement and attitude toward learning has been enhanced through service learning. Buchen (1995) asserted that service learning exhibited developmental stages that paralleled and fed into patterns of academic growth. Clark and Clark (1994) reviewed research over four decades supporting the learning

effectiveness of interdisciplinary and experiential curricula, especially among early adolescent learners. They emphasized interrelationships across the curriculum which created powerful learning opportunities that helped students find relevance in course content and become more actively engaged in learning. The authors advocated for teacher preparation for interdisciplinary teaching and administrative leadership, parental involvement, service learning, and assessment methods with an interdisciplinary focus. Clark and Welmers (1994) found that service learning provided early adolescents with an unique opportunity to integrate curriculum and school activities which could be done as cooperatively or as an independent class project. Wallach and Callahan (1994) described a St. Louis school experimenting with applying the Multiple Intelligence Theory to their curricula. By surveying area museums and designing user-friendly botanical exhibits for a community-based project, first graders developed a better understanding of their own varied learning strengths.

Service learning has also demonstrated both intellectual and social benefits in undergraduate education. Cohen and Kinsey (1994) studied service learning and related projects in an undergraduate course in the area of mass communication and society. They determined that service learning is an effective instructional strategy that increased student understanding of complex material. The study provided information about gains in student achievement and attitude when teachers integrated community service into the curriculum as an instructional strategy. Checkoway (1996) described a methodology of having undergraduate college students participate in student workshops designed to facilitate community problem solving and planning efforts. Although Checkoway was quick to point out that those workshops are not the only or best means of student learning in the community, he presented evidence and argument that this

service learning methodology enhanced students' learning and critical thinking. Underscoring the duality of positive effects on servant learners, Levesque and Prosser (1996) assert:

> Service learning experiences are valuable opportunities for students to learn from those they instruct and to construct a meaningful reality of democratic learning communities transcending school campuses. Teacher educators can learn from their students' commitment to contribute actively their communities and the world in ways that strengthen the communities they serve. (p. 333)

Service learning has been shown to enhance students' socialization and citizenship. Brill (1994) surveyed thirteen special education teachers to examine the effects of disabled adolescents' active participation in service learning. The study yielded promising results in attendance and academic skills for students with mild disabilities, and in socialization and relationships with non-disabled peers for adolescents with moderate to profound disabilities. Cooper (1993) found that service learning programs, which combined practical volunteer community service experience with traditional academic study, were cost-effective and meaningful alternatives to college activities programming. Such programs increased student learning options, promoted good public relations, involved faculty and departments, and attracted a wider variety of students than traditional campus activities.

First citing the many reasons for the failure of Western-based schooling in reference to Native American youth, Hall (1995) presented and discussed three different service learning schools which utilize the value system and integrated learning approach of traditional Native American education. MacNichole (1993) concluded that community service learning was the right thing to

do for professional renewal, enrichment, and establishing a meaningful context for learning. Examples were cited from Gig Harbor High School in Washington to demonstrate the positive role of community service learning in school environments. Macy (1994) outlined a model for developing a spirit of volunteerism and social responsibility among students on the college campus. The model incorporated five phases of student development that accompany community service participation. Suggestions were also made for implementing such a model effectively within the student affairs function. Ruggenberg (1993) found that schools should incorporate opportunities for learning that involve altruism and community participation and described a secondary school community service program. Siegel and Rockwood (1993) outlined connections between community service experiences and preparing young people for participatory citizenship in a democratic society, identifying components of democratic educational practices, and distinguishing characteristics that promote democratic citizenship education.

Similarly, service learning has been shown to enhance both students' self-concept and self-esteem. Harrington's (1992) recent visits to school-based community service programs in different parts of New York City were described and provided a context for a review of the educational literature to highlight the value of community service for middle schoolers. The author illustrated ways that community service activities counteract the negative self-concept of middle level learners and argued for service learning for urban adolescents. Wade (1994) discussed the history of U.S. community service programs and asserted that the potential benefits for students included increased self-esteem, enhanced motivation and interest in school, improved academic achievement, and increased social responsibility. Wade also included a list of curriculum resources and a bibliography. Yates (1995) provided an overview of research on

community service in adolescence and outlined a theoretical approach that relates service participation to identity development. The report then provided a framework for organizing the current research literature by delineating three concepts associated with service: agency, social relatedness, and moral-political awareness. The study suggested that experiences of service pertained to the process of trying to understand oneself with social-historical reality and helped youth to feel that they could actively "make history" rather than simply "live history".

Service learning has also been demonstrated to enhance students' mentoring ability. Traditional mentoring programs often match a mature adult with an at-risk youth. Schneider (1995) described a mentoring organization in Washington, DC, which practiced a creative variation of the approach by training high school students to mentor troubled elementary school students. The author then considered the possibilities and problems of this model which would blend cross-age youth mentoring with service learning.

Service learning also enhanced students' prosocial decision making and reasoning. Batchelder and Root (1994) investigated effects of characteristics of service learning experiences on development of undergraduates. Participants in service learning courses and control-group students wrote pre- and post-responses to social problems. Service learning students made a significant gains on certain cognitive dimensions and had significant increases in prosocial decision making, prosocial reasoning, and identity processing. Experiential education, service learning in particular, offered one pedagogy for teaching democracy and this paper provided general and specific guidelines for accomplishing that goal. Couto (1994) asserted that service learning can be incorporated by the teachers into classroom assignments and other parts of the curriculum. Service learning had integrated community service and democratic curriculum particularly well. Service learning provided political scientists with a pedagogy to disseminate to

other departments and schools. Two service learning programs at the University of Richmond were described as examples. Israel and Ilvento (1995) presented a project integrating community service learning with community development. Students learned about their community and were motivated to seek future involvement. The community used information gathered to develop a youth recreation program.

Students also experienced positive attitude changes toward diverse communities and varied populations when interacting with those people in service learning experiences. Battistoni's (1995) experiences with service learning programs at Rutgers University and Providence College illustrated how college student involvement in community service caused them to consider and value their membership in diverse communities. Bornstein (1993) examined how faculty and student leaders in Tutoring Enrichment Assistance Models for School (TEAMS) project at the University of Amherst challenged the assumptions that college students had about tutoring. The author also promoted new understandings of stereotypes, hierarchical group dynamics, and inequality in schools. Bringle and Kremer (1993) compared students who visited homebound elderly with a control group. Their research showed that the visitation groups were significantly more positive toward the elderly and their views of their own aging. Brown (1993) described the C.A.R.E. program, a student-led program that pairs high school students with elementary school students, who have moderate special needs, for eight weeks of art and recreation. The high school students benefited from learning about others with special needs and the elementary students benefited from experiencing quality time with a mentor. Fiegehauer and Fiegehauer (1994) described an experiential education project at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania that trained undergraduate students to be literacy tutors and required them to complete sixty volunteer hours tutoring at a community service agency in exchange for academic

credit. The authors determined that the mutual benefits of volunteer service included the breakdown of social stereotypes and the development of human relationship skills. Krans and Roarke (1994) described an experiential education program in which students from Keuka College in New York traveled to Costa Rica to participate in a service project and to learn about the country's political, socioeconomic, and ecological conditions. Pre-trip preparations included studying experiential experimentation and the reciprocity of service learning. Krans and Roarke also found that social stereotyping on the part of program participants to begin breaking down. McGowan and Blankenship (1994) depicted the experiences of twelve students in a life history project who visited older adults and it revealed the students' pre-program assumptions, personal conflict over these assumptions, and positive reevaluation of the intergenerational relationships.

Porter and Schwartz (1993) reported on an approach to teaching the sociology of AIDS by combining course work with weekly volunteer work in an AIDS agency. Porter and Schwartz concluded with a discussion of the benefits of experiential learning -- including the breakdown of AIDS sufferers' stereotyping by participants -- as well as guidelines for establishing similar community service programs. Scannell and Roberts (1994) developed a guide designed to enlarge and expand inter-generational community service and to serve as a practical tool to anyone wishing to start inter-generational community service programs (ICSPs). The ICSP topics discussed included a rationale, best practices, planning, implementation, program evaluation, state of art, and tips from three ICSP experts. Silcox and Sweeney (1993) described a joint American-Russian environmental service project in which American secondary school students, teachers, and environmentalists set up a learning center in Russia. Silcox and Sweeney also discussed the interpersonal connections and culture conflict experienced by American students as well as their enhanced understanding and appreciation of others' culture. Woehrle

(1993) described a program in which students at the Friends Academy in upstate New York participated in service activities designed to match their level of social awareness. This state mandated program helped others and nurtured student's nonacademic strengths.

Even students' job placement and career development was positively affected by involvement in service learning (Carter & Franta, 1994). The researchers reviewed changes in the workplace and in campus recruitment procedures that affect student job placement and described the University of Missouri's job development program which included service learning and work-study. Carter and Franta detailed the positive effects of service learning on career development including enhanced prospects of securing new employment.

Service learning had been shown to have positive effects on the attitude and behavior of elementary, secondary, and undergraduate college students. The effect of service learning on educational leaders, even aspiring educational leaders who are graduate students, had remained an issue not directly and empirically addressed. This investigation inaugurates inquiry in this area.

Method

In the summer 1995, educational leadership doctoral program participants were challenged to fulfill service projects in economically disadvantaged area school districts and other public institutions. Activities ranged from curriculum writing to strategic planning to tutoring and teaching summer school students to assisting with building and maintenance projects. The service opportunities in which those educational leadership doctoral program participants were engaged served as extensions of the program's ethical framework and allowed the participants and faculty to "practice what they teach." Moreover, this service practicum allowed participants to practice leadership skills being mastered, to complete items on their

Professional Strands Practica Checklist (Henderson, 1995), and to become involved in activities and practical applications related to their dissertation research.

A menu of service opportunities was published to the program's participants and they made their selection and completed the necessary arrangements to engage in the service activity. The service opportunities were intended to give doctoral program participants an opportunity to practice educational leadership skills in settings which otherwise could not afford the services being rendered. A specified week in the summer was the time provided for such service, but participants were reminded that the service practicum could be completed at other times according to participants' needs and the needs and the requirements of cooperating institutions. Although they could choose to engage in a service opportunity individually, participants were encouraged to work in groups because of previous program experience that learning is enhanced through collaborative effort and group reflection and feedback.

The program's cohort members participated in service activities in economically disadvantaged area school districts and other "financially-challenged" public institutions. Working primarily in small groups, educational leadership doctoral program cohort members:

- developed a feasibility study for implementation of a middle school within existing facilities and personnel constraints in a poor, rural school district;
- reviewed an urban school district's strategic plan and gave recommendations to complete the plan;
- assisted with the strategic planning process of an urban Boys & Girls Club;
- created a cohort design program for a nursing program of a small, urban college;
- coordinated a fund raising effort for an area Performing Arts For Children organization;

- administered a multi-age student and senior citizen exercise program and planting flowers activities with senior citizen patients;
- assisted with a building construction project;
- prepared the initial course structure for an urban school's career exploration program;
- established a homework support program within an instructional support team environment for an urban school district;
- provided a learning styles workshop for all teachers in an urban diocesan school district;
- designed an alternative education program for adjudicated students from several urban school districts near a northeastern United States city; and
- developed a transition plan for special education students to provide better service of the needs of the students, through curricular adaptations, unique instructional activities, and cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and heterogeneous grouping teaching techniques.

Thirty-five participants completed the service learning experience and turned in a Service Practicum Report form, on which were reported in short-answer format the dates, location, and description of the practicum, approximate number of hours served, estimated number of people expected to benefit, both directly and indirectly, anticipated benefits to the organization and its clients, benefits the participant derived from the experience, and problems or difficulties encountered. Coding categories for analysis were developed and applied to the benefits and problems reports. Two researchers read the responses and discussed the categorization until consensus was reached.

Results

The 35 participants spent an average of 14.51 hours (s=8.44; range 7 - 40 hours) in the service practicum; 2 participants indicated that their service constituted ongoing service work in

the target organization. The estimated number of people to benefit directly ranged from 0 to 1000, with a mean of 100.09. Responses to the indirect benefit question (i.e., "How many individuals in the organization benefited indirectly from the service practicum?") prompted domino-theory reasoning, for example: "if each teacher implements the model, all of her students will benefit."

Reported benefits to the organization served included benefits to the program structure and services in place (n=40) and benefits to the stakeholders and clients individually (n=24); one respondent reported "none." Reported benefits to the practicum participants were categorized in a two-way matrix (see Table 1), according to whether knowledge, skills, attitudes, or network connections were developed and according to whether developments in these categories were reported to be new or practice/refinement of pre-existing knowledge, skills, etc. Practicum participants reported problems in the service learning experiences which included client resistance (n=13), none (n=11), time (n=10), lack of background information, skills, or resources (n=9), and affective reactions (n=4). These benefits and problems will be described in detail later in the paper.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Given the overwhelming evidence detailed in the Introduction that participation in service learning experiences enhanced students' intellectual and pro-social behavior in P-12 and undergraduate education, cognitive learning, socialization and citizenship, self-concept and self-esteem, mentoring ability, attitudes toward diverse communities and varied populations, and job

placement and career development, it was not surprising that similar results were found with aspiring school leaders' involvement with service learning. In particular, the findings in this preliminary study suggested that those aspiring school leaders -- having participated in service learning practicum experiences -- saw service learning as benefiting the organization and organizational incumbents served and the aspiring school leaders themselves. Of particular interest was their delineation of the benefits to themselves. Finally, the service learning practicum participants were also able to identify problems to be addressed and overcome in the service learning experiences.

Even on the basis of this study's limited involvement in service learning, the program participants were able to benefit the organizations being targeted for services and organizational incumbents. Domino-theory reasoning for number of individuals benefiting indirectly from service learning notwithstanding, participants reported a 24 instances of organizational incumbents who were aided through the limited time invested by practicum participants in the experience. Greater specificity in the parameters for asking respondents to delineate between the estimated number of individuals benefiting directly versus indirectly would undoubtedly have clarified these somewhat ambiguous findings. Nonetheless, many individuals (3,503) were perceived to have benefited directly from these interventions. Similarly, 40 examples of enhancements to organizational programs and processes were provided by practicum participants. (See the Methods section of this paper for a comprehensive list of the programs targeted for improvement in economically disadvantaged area school districts and other "financially-challenged" public institutions.) It is noteworthy that only one respondent indicated that there was no ostensible benefit to the organization served.

Service learning also was viewed as having benefited the aspiring school leaders themselves. Table 1 displays those benefits perceived and reported by the service practicum participants. The benefits are categorized as "Knowledge" pertaining to the activity in which the participants was involved; "Skills" that were required as part of the service experience; "Attitude" regarding the specific experience or the concept of service learning, in general; and "Networks" of individuals with which the participants were able to interact and to access as a future resource. These benefits mirror many of the findings of service learning accomplishments in the studies outlined in the Introduction. However, this study delineates between acquisition of new skills and utilization of existing ones. The doctoral program participants were mature, experienced educators who had developed many skills during their careers to date. A balance between the participants' acquisition of new benefits and the practicing of pre-existing conditions is apparent. Moreover, though there seemed to be a somewhat greater utilization of pre-existing skills than the acquisition of new ones, and an involvement in new interpersonal networks rather than tapping into extant networks, there was also remarkable balance among the four categories of perceived benefits as reported by the practicum participants. In addition, though not part of this investigation's original design, it became apparent in post hoc discussions of service learning experiences with the practicum participants that there may have been an additional benefit derived from group participation in a service learning experience. That is, participants who were engaged in service learning as part of a small group anecdotally expressed a greater sense of achievement of desired ends and satisfaction with the experience as a whole than did their peers who committed service as an individual. This issue of the effectiveness of, and satisfaction derived from, individual versus group participation in service learning experiences should be a focus of future investigations.

Practicum participants were also able to identify problems to be addressed and overcome in the service learning experiences. It was heartening that there were 11 reported incidences of no problems evident in the service learning practicum. The problems noted were not unexpected. Practicum participants were busy people; they were employed full time and were doctoral students who had other course assignments to fulfill over the summer term in which the service practicum occurred. Time, or the lack thereof, was noted by 10 individuals as a constraining factor to the effectiveness of the experience. The related issues of the absence or lack of background information, skills, or resources were identified by 9 participants. It can be argued, of course, that this very absence encouraged participants to acquire new information and abilities, and this outcome is displayed aptly in Table 1. Next, only 4 reports of affective problems were presented either in terms of the participant's enjoying the experience or the organizational incumbents working together with the participant in a mutually enjoyable fashion.

None of those items was the most reported problem identified by practicum participants in service learning experiences, though. Client resistance was reported by 13 participants as a problem to be overcome. While this issue deserves additional study, two possible explanations were derived from debriefing discussions with program participants. First, some participants were invited into several organizations by the head of the organization without the involvement of or assent by the individuals running the projects that were the targets of the service practicum. Resentment over that lack of decision making participation was reported. Similarly in at least one instance, when the outcome of the service practicum was presented to a mid-level manager who was neither involved in the approval of the service practicum participants nor was involved in the project itself, that manager effectively vetoed the project. This issue of problems related to

service learning is one that is rich in terms of practical implications and application. It should serve as the basis for additional study.

The perceived benefits and problems associated with service learning experiences, related both to the organizations and organizational incumbents being served and to the service learning participants, may be interpreted in light of Kahne and Westheimer's (1996) categorization of the moral, political, and intellectual goals of change-oriented service learning. Indeed, Kahne and Westheimer conclude their article with the policy making imperative that, "Rather than assume, erroneously, that all educators share the same vision, we think it is better to be explicit about the numerous and different visions that drive the creation and implementation of service learning activities in schools" (p. 599).

To understand the choices of service learning opportunities and to choose successfully among those choices, educational leaders must have knowledge of, and (preferably) experience in, those service activities. The benefits reported in the present study, and even the problems identified, were more consistent with the social reconstructive and transformational goals of change-oriented service learning than with the civic-duty, additive goals of charity-oriented service learning (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996), and therefore it may be concluded that the effects of the experience could be expected to contribute to the development of ethical, change-oriented educational leaders.

Conclusion

The concept of service learning has received much recent scrutiny. There seems to be ample evidence to suggest that service learning aids students' application of knowledge and attitudes toward the objects and subjects of their service. On the other hand, there has been little investigation of the means by which educational leaders and aspiring educational leaders, who

have to make programmatic decisions regarding the possible development and implementation of service learning programs, gain an understanding and valuing of service learning. This study begins to fill that void. The findings suggest that participation in service learning experiences by aspiring school leaders may enhance their valuing of service learning, may enable them to assess the benefits of service learning to the organizations and individuals served, and may permit those aspiring leaders to delineate the difficulties and problems to be overcome in service learning programs. Future studies replicating this investigation and studying the longitudinal impact of service learning involvement by school leaders on their attitudes toward service learning and their implementation of the variety of service learning applications in their own institutions would be useful in determining the full impact of this phenomenon.

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Table 1

Reported Benefits of Service Learning to the Practicum Participants

	Categories of Benefits			
	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes	Network Connections
Newly Attained Benefit Developed	13	4	8	9
Existing Benefit Practiced/Refined	7	9	11	5